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Theory of the thrill

In my independent study, I will analyze the use of space seen in The Ring (Japanese version) by Hideo Nakata, The Shining by Stanley Kubrick, The Devil´s Backbone by Guillermo del Toro and Psycho by Alfred Hitchcock; and determine what are the techniques used by the directors to build up tension, and to create horror atmospheres in places, which doesn’t have typical horror scenery. I will evaluate and examine this through in depth discussion of cinematography and mise en scene. This investigation will introduce me the techniques and style directors have for building tension and the effect caused on the audience.

Word count:101

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| MOVIE | DIRECTOR | YEAR | COUNTRY |
| Psycho | Alfred Hitchcock | 1960 | USA |
| The Shinning | Stanley Kubrick | 18980 | USA |
| The Ring | Hideo Nakata | 1998 | Japan |
| The Devil´s Backbone | Guillermo del Toro | 2001 | Spain |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Visual** | **Time (seconds)** | | **Audio** | |
| NARRATOR appears on screen with a MS. I am wearing a pig mask. The background is dark and nothing is visible. A MS of me.  Dark screen. Slowly fade in to high angle shots of a dark raging ocean, dominant of the framing. Scanning of waves, different angle shots just to emphasize the movement of the ocean.  The Ring. [00:00:48]-[00:01:10]. (Filmed from helicopter, above a dark ocean)  Fade in from color black. Words “THEORY OF THE THRILL” appears on screen.  Cross fades to clip from PSYCHO. [00:02:09]-[00:02:15]  (Camera is panning the city of phoenix, a panoramic view).  Image of the scream of Marion Crane in the shower appears on screen.[[1]](#endnote-1)  The image then cross-dissolves to the clip again from PYSCHO. It is resumed from [00:02:15]-[00:02:20]  NARRATOR (I’m still with the pig mask) walks through the corridors of the Overlook Hotel (setting of THE SHINING) Backwards tracking of myself.  Picture of the Overlook hotel.[[2]](#endnote-2)  Picture of Stanley Kubrick appears on screen.[[3]](#endnote-3)  Picture fades to setting of the scene, MS of the NARRATOR.  Cross dissolve to clip from THE SHINING [00: 49:11]-[00:50:03]. Danny is riding his tricycle in the hotel, then faces the twins. There are constant changes in shots, from tracking, to long shots, etc.  Fades to MS of narrator in the long corridor of the Over Look hotel.  Picture of Guillermo del Toro.[[4]](#endnote-4)  Fades to clip of THE DEVILS BACKBONE [00:54:33]-[00:55:39] (Carlos is trying desperately to open the door, while Santi is walking towards him slowly)  Cross fading to image still of THE SHINING [00:36:34] (rear shot of Danny while riding his tricycle)  Image still of THE DEVILS BACKBONE. CU of Carlos (protagonist) [00:55:14]  Fade to Image still of Santi´s (ghost)[00:55:37]  Back to narrator, I am still wearing the pig mask and standing in the corridor of the Over Look Hotel. LS of me.  Picture of Hideo Nakata.[[5]](#endnote-5)  Cross fades to clip of THE RING [00:14:21]-[00:14:30]. (Yoichi is at the end of the corridor, everything is dark, except for the light seen in the background. We can only see Yoichi´s silhouette).  Back to Narrator. Slow tracking until a CU shot of me while I speak.  Picture of a dark corridor. [[6]](#endnote-6)  Picture of Norman Bates, maniac killer from PSYCHO.[[7]](#endnote-7)  NARRATOR, I appear on screen with a demon clown mask. LS of me, as I am standing in the path between the Bates Motel and Norman Bates house.  Cross fade to picture of the Bates Motel.[[8]](#endnote-8)  Black. Words “THEORY OF THE THRILL” appear on screen.    Dissolves to image still from PSYCHO [01:09:62]. (Norman Bates and detective Arbogast are discussing about the disappearance of Marion Crane. Shot reverse shot is used, MS of the characters).  Fades in back to NARRATOR in Bates Motel. MS of me.  Cross fading to clip from PSYCHO [00:47:03]-[00:47:53]  (Marion Crane is taking a shower, when suddenly Bates “mother” from behind attacks her and kills her with a knife. CU of Marion´s horror face and MS of the violence from the scene).  Cross-dissolve to NARRATOR in Bates Motel, I am wearing clown mask. MS of me.  Fades in to clip from THE SHINING [01:11:51]- [01:13:41] (Jack Torrance and the waiter Mr. Grady are in the red bathroom from the great gala party, the celebration of 4th of July. Ls of them, also ms of each of the characters while using the technique shot reverse shots).  Fades to clip of THE SHINING [00:57:04]-[01:15:02]  (Jack Torrance enters room 237, where he meets with the evil force: a naked woman that seduces him. Dominance of the sequence, Jack and the naked woman kissing.)  Cross-dissolved to setting of NARRATOR in Bates Motel. Back tracking of me as I speak, I am still wearing the clown mask.  NARRATOR is sitting on a chair in the studio. I am wearing a cat mask. MS of me.  Cross fades to clip from THE RING [01:20:02]-[1:21:06] (Akasawa is inside the well, tired and looking for Sadako´s body. CU and MS of her focusing mainly in her terror face. It is dark and the setting is very terrifying, as it is closed, dark and humid).  Picture of Sadako.  Cross-dissolves to MS of NARRATOR and Hideo Nakata. We are in the studio, and we are sitting respectively in our chairs, one by the side of the other.  Camera frames NAKATA in MS.  Camera frames NARRATOR with cat mask. MS of me.  Nakata says goodbye with a hand movement to the camera and leaves the studio.  Camera then frames the NARRATOR. MS of me.  Cross-fades to clip from THE DEVILS BACKBONE [00:53:50]-[00:54:19] (Santi the ghost, is standing in front of a wall, everything is dark only his silhouette is visible. Then Santi turns and faces Carlos, he starts walking towards him. Audience can see his pale white face, bloody in the forehead, and demon face. Typical features for ghosts in horror movies).  Fades to clip from PSYCHO [00:47:03]-[00:47:53](Marion Crane is taking a shower, when suddenly Bates “mother” from behind attacks her and kills her with a knife. CU of Marion´s horror face and MS of the violence from the scene).  Black screen. Words: THEORY OF THE THRILL appears once again.  Black. Clip from THE SHINING appears on screen [00:36:39]-[00:37:17] (Danny again is riding his tricycle, but this time he meets with the murdered twins. He sees the crime scene, and faces the twins. LS from the twins and CU to Danny´s horror expressions).  NARRATOR I am in the studio, standing up, wearing a devils mask.  Image still of murdered twins in THE SHINING [00:50:06] (corpses in the corridor with puddles of blood everywhere, assassination image)  Fade to black. | | 00:00  00:15  00:22  00:25  00:31  00:32  00:40  00:43  00:45  00:47  00:50  1:40  1:43  1:45  2:47  2:49  2:50  2:52  2:55  2:57  3:00  3:15  3:17  3:19  3:22  3:24  3:29  3:33  3:38  4:00  4:04  6:54  5:54  6:00  6:05  7:05  7:07  7:10  7:15  7:20  7:21  7:22  7:39  8:29  8:30  9:11  9:15  9:17 | **SCENE 1. INT- dark studio**.  [MUSIC]:The house of leaves. Kevin MacLeod.  VO: (in a low and severe voice) Welcome to the party of thrill. NARRATOR: We will start a journey where you will experience and understand the techniques that Hitchcock, Kubrick, Nakata and Del Toro use in space to make you feel uneasy and frightened when watching their movies. PSYCHO, THE SHINING, THE RING AND THE DEVILS BACKBONE are the movies we will analyze today. Only the brave ones can watch this, because you are about to experience the thrill…  NARRATOR (V.O): In film the use of space is essential for creating the atmosphere of the scene. Hideo Nakata in his opening sequence of THE RING, used a sequence of shots which are highly rich in mise en scene, as there are many elements in the scenery which are going on. The ocean and the music are very relevant for this introduction of tense, horror type movie, as it makes the audience feel uncomfortable at once.  Evil laugh is heard, accompanied by [MUSIC]:The house of leaves. Kevin MacLeod.  NARRATOR (V.O): However, that is not the case for every horror type movie. PSYCHO by Alfred Hitchcock, starts very differently. It introduces the audience with a panning of Phoenix, Arizona. People watching the movie for the fist time, wont expect that eventually this movie is one of the best horror films ever, as the director introduces the movie with non-tensioning atmosphere or images. Here the director establishes the audience in context: Phoenix 1960, but it doesn’t introduce horror, however as the movie evolves so does the tension. Hitchcock is a tension builder.  **SCENE 2.INT Overlook Hotel. NIGHT**  NARRATOR: In these same corridors, the highest tensioning points of the film THE SHINING occur. As you can see, the space here seems very conventional and non-horror type. Actually the Overlook Hotel, is one of the best hotels in the USA, because of its elegance and familiar atmosphere. However Kubrick manages to make one of the most exceptional horror movies ever. Why is this? Well Kubrick uses music such as “THE AWAKENING OF JACOB” by Krzysztof Penderecki, to create tension in the atmosphere. We can therefore see how the use of space can be influenced by music to build tension.  MUSIC:[The awakening of Jacob-Krzysztof Penderecki].  NARRATOR VO: As we can see from this extract, Kubrick uses Long Shots and rear tracking of Danny in his tricycle. He frames him the middle if the screen, making him the dominant object. As Kubrick doesn’t use any front tracking, or shots from the front, the audience doesn’t know what is in front of Danny, and what will happen to him. That´s why it’s so breathtaking and tensioning for the audience; as every time Danny is about to turn the corner, they don’t know what will be waiting for him in this long corridors. Kubrick uses telephoto lenses, as he focuses on Danny as the dominant, and the background blurry. The audience therefore expects to see a silhouette in the background of the frame.  NARRATOR: The use of long shots in long corridors is an effect not only seen in THE SHINING but also in the Spanish movie: “THE DEVILS BACKBONE”. Guillermo del Toro, uses wisely this effect when Santi, which is the ghost, is chasing Carlos, which is the protagonist.  NARRATOR V.O: There are several differences between THE SHINING and THE DEVILS BACKBONE when talking about their high tensioning scenes in long corridors. Del Toro, uses dark lights that form shadows, creating then a more uncertain place for the audience as there is less visibility. On the other hand, Kubrick launches a high tensioning point with all lights on. Audience therefore has a clear visibility of the scene. What Kubrick again does, is using shots from behind the character, which makes the audience uncertain of what is in front of the protagonist Del Toro, focuses on creating tension by using close ups on protagonists horror face. Also the use of different angle positions of the camera, from all sides makes the audience feel also uneasy, as there is not a panoramic view of the scene, and audience feels that Santi´s ghost may appear. [MUSIC]: The house of leaves. Kevin MacLeod sounds loudly.  NARRATOR: The director Hideo Nakata from THE RING, also uses a high tightening scene in a long corridor. He seems to use Del Toro similar techniques, as he also uses a dark long space. What Nakata differs from Del Toro, is the fact that he uses a single long shot for the extract, therefore it reduces the ability for the audience to see different point angles of the scene. What this causes on the audience is not surprise that suddenly a ghost will appear, but it makes the audience uneasy with the fact that they will be able to see the ghost approaching the protagonist in a “live” vision. However this doesn’t happen, nevertheless the technique used by Nakata makes the audience think that eventually should had happen. We can therefore conclude that horror type movies, which involve ghosts, such as THE SHINING, THE RING and THE DEVILS BACKBONE, uses at some point, a scene with long corridors. PSYCHO on the other hand, which doesn´t have ghosts, but rather a maniac character, doesn’t have any scenes that involve the use of corridors to create tension.  **SCENE 3. EXT DAY. Bates Motel.**  MUSIC: [Bump In The Night. Kevin MacLeod] NARRATOR: I’m standing in the place where the most high tensioning parts of the movie PSYCHO took place: The Bates Motel. As you can see it looks very peaceful and pleasant. However in Hitchcock´s film, the place looks pretty terrifying. NARRATOR V.O: What makes it such a horror type movie?  Maniac laugh, is loudly played.  NARRATOR (V.O): As you can see the use of space in PSYCHO, is based basically in color. Hitchcock is recognized by the techniques related with noir cinema. The use of dark colors and shadows in the film, makes it an extraordinary example of the effectiveness of low key lightening and the chiaroscuro. The Shadows produced are cast upon characters faces or settings, making it obscure by darkness, and alters the atmosphere of a scene, as it makes the audience feel that the character has a cynical attitude.  NARRATOR: Besides as the whole movie of PSYCHO is in black and white, it is very difficult for the audience to distinguish between day or night. That is called a night-for-night effect, as the whole movie seems to elapse during the night.  NARRATOR V.O: Night is the time were generally tensioning and scary moments occur in horror movies. Therefore as the entire movie seems to occur during the night, tension and horror is persistent in the whole movie.  Also Hitchcock is famous by his editing of quick: shot reverse shot. This technique is used in the shower scene, before Marian is murdered, between the two shots of the terror face of Marion and the silhouette of bates “mother” with the knife. The effect caused by this technique is that audience can see the events in a “live” version as it is faster, and Marion´s pain is more physical and real.  MUSIC:[*Lontano* by [György Ligeti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gy%C3%B6rgy_Ligeti)]  Not only we can make references to the use of color in PSYCHO, but also in THE SHINING  NARRATOR (V.O): Psychology of colors used in spaces is very relevant in creating atmospheres, as it leaves different messages on the audience. In this extract we can see that Jack Torrance is in a red bathroom. Red is the most emotionally intense color, as it stimulates a faster heartbeat and breathing[[9]](#footnote-1). Red alludes to blood and violence. Precisely in this scene, Jack Torrance is making a pact with the evil force of the hotel, as he commits to kill his whole family. Therefore the actions of the scene can be definitely linked to the color.  NARRATOR (V.O): The green bathroom seen here is also an example of the use of color to create the atmosphere. Psychology of color, says that green means fertility and growing things (Johnson). Here, the evil force of the hotel has the form of a naked woman, and Jack Torrance kisses her, making it an erotic scene alluding to procreate and fertility. Also in the scene the “evil” Jack is growing stronger and stronger, as the green color suggests, “growing”.  NARRATOR: Kubrick and Hitchcock’s films are the only ones from these 4 movies, we can relate to the use of color. Both of them build tension and mise en scene through the use of color. Kubrick repetitively uses colors in his spaces during high tensioning moments, mainly when jack meets the evil force of the Hotel.  **SCENE 4. INT. STUDIO. NIGHT**  NARRATOR: We will now start looking in detail to the most high-tensioning points of the films, were the violence or presence of the evil spirits from the films are seen, and the space seen in such scenes. Let us begin with THE RING.  MUSIC: [The Well. Hans Zimmer]  NARRATOR (V.O): The use of a long, uncertain dark space such as the well, and the lightening of the space creates such tensioning and scaring atmosphere. In the scene, Akasawa is in the well looking for the corpse of Sadako. Therefore the audience is expecting that at any moment Sadako will appear with her terrifying aspect and assassinate Akasawa. Nakata here uses several types of shots such as: close ups, middle shots and rear middle shots. This variety of shots makes the audience feel uncomfortable, because it doesn’t show the space as a whole and we cannot see what is happening exactly, therefore we cannot see when Sadako may appear. To complement the use of shots, Nakata´s lightening is terrifying. The only source of light of the scene, comes from the torch which is hanging and moves deliberately in the space. When the torch lits an specific place, the rest remains dark. Therefore the audience may think that precisely where it lits Sadako may appear.  NARRATOR: We are gathered here with Hideo Nakata, the director of THE RING. He will explain us, why he chose the well in his scenes.  NAKATA: When I lived in the countryside in Japan, I saw a well about 5 meters deep, but for me it seemed a bottomless hell. I thought once I got inside it I would never get out of it… it is very interesting how we can relate the well to some kind of bottomless hell.  NARRATOR: And that is exactly what the audience feels, the fact that this space in under the surface, and its dark with rocks and humid makes the relation with the underworld. Definitely this space contributes to the tension builder.  [BACKGROUND]: Applause’s are heard.  NARRATOR: Now we will be looking at a high tensioning scene from THE DEVILS BACKBONE.    NARRATOR (V.0): In this extract Carlos is trying to talk with Santi. It is completely dark; nothing is visible but the door behind Carlos and both children’s faces. Del Toro uses shot reverse shot to demonstrate the tension between these two characters. Lightening is very scarce. We know that nothing else is going to happen or “show up” as Santi is present in the scene. Space here doesn’t contribute that much with the creation of tensioning atmosphere in the scene, but the aspect of Santi and the relation he has with Carlos makes it more tensioning.  NARRATOR (V.O): However the contrary effect is seen in this scene from PSYCHO. As Marion takes the shower, someone, which we don’t know who it is, comes from behind with a knife and assassinates her. The relation of Marion with the assassin is unknown for the audience. But the space in the scene, which is a bathroom makes it more scary. The fact that from behind the shower curtains a shadow appears holding a knife makes it a tension builder, because here the use of shadows is clearly seen in the space. Also the different camera positions and angles, of Marion highlight her fear expressions and weakness, as she is unable to defend herself.  MUSIC: [Right Behind You. Kevin MacLeod]    NARRATOR (V.O): In THE SHINING, Kubrick makes both a relation between the characters and the use of space for tension builders. Shot reverse shot is used to emphasize the relation between the characters. Close ups on Danny’s face are also used to show how scared he is. The space, are the long corridors mentioned before, but this time we can see brief images of the crime scene of the twins. The corridor is stained in blood, with puddles of blood all over the place. An ax lays by the twins corpses. This scenery is typical horror type, because there are detailed images of assassination. However those images don’t last longer than a second, they are flashbacks of what happened to the twin’s years ago. Kubrick doesn’t want that those violent images last very long. But he indeed frightens the audience very much, as he uses space with typical horror scenery.  **SCENE 5. INT STUDIO NIGHT.**  We have seen today, 4 of the most frightening movies ever. We have learned different techniques Directors use to build tension through the use of space. I hope you have enjoyed todays journey, and I hope you sleep well tonight. See you next time for more THRILL.  MANIAC LAUGH IS PLAYED.  MUSIC:[Rainsform. Bernard Herrmann] PSYCHO soundtrack. |

1. (wbgene, 2011) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. (Pete, 2010) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. (Riaz, 2011) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. (Mark, 2009) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. (Frankiechan, 2010) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. (Bicepk, 2010) [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. (wiki, 2011) [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. (studios, 2008)

   # Annotated source list

   AgentLexi. (23 de 10 de 2008). *Review of Psycho Psychology.* . Recuperado el 28 de 10 de 2011, de http://www.listal.com/viewentry/158399. This web page was useful because i could understand more the physcological thrill of pshycho, and the effect caused in the audience. In my independent study i could relate to it, because then i could understand better the character of Norman Bates.

   Ager, R. (2008). *collective learning*. Recuperado el 28 de 10 de 2011, de http://www.collativelearning.com/the%20shining.html. This page is a detailed study guide of The Shining, thanks to it i could understnd many features of the movie and i learned techniques from Kubrick, such as the characterization of Jack´s crazy personality.

   Bicepk. (03 de 08 de 2010). *Devianart*. Recuperado el 20 de 01 de 2012, de https://bicepk.deviantart.com/art/Dark-corridor-IV-173833705. This source showed me a typical example of a dark horror type corridor.

   Dirks, T. (s.f.). *FilmSite*. Recuperado el 27 de 10 de 2011, de http://www.filmsite.org/psyc3.html. This web page was very relevant for my reserch on Psycho, in it there is a detailed study in the techniques used by Hitchcock in some of his most famouse scenes of the movie. It talks about framing, sound and camera techniques in order to cause an appropiate scary effect on the audience.

   Frankiechan. (16 de 02 de 2010). Recuperado el 20 de 01 de 2011, de Asian Movie Pulse: http://www.asianmoviepulse.com/2010/02/remake-of-hideo-nakatas-dont-look-up-gets-dvd-release-date/ From this source i could understand and meet more with the director Hideo Nakata, beacause it tells some special features of the director, such as the fact that he made thrilling movie about WWII.

   King, S. (Escritor), & Kubrick, S. (Dirección). (1980). *The Shining* [Película]. United States. Original movie used for the independents study.

   Mark, P. (13 de 04 de 2009). *MUBI*. Recuperado el 20 de 01 de 2012, de http://mubi.com/cast\_members/4933. This source was incredibly important because in t could understand more and more Guillermo del Toro. Something i will like to highlight about this source is the following quote the director said: “I like actors that are good with pantomime and that can transmit a lot by their presence and attitude more than through their dialogue.” The quote explains why he made the ghost of Santi so terrorific and with so many detail, because as stated by the quote that the he prefers very phantomine characters that make more presence.

   Naito, T. (2004). *Japnas art and culture magazine*. (Kateigaho, Productor) Recuperado el 27 de 10 de 2011, de http://int.kateigaho.com/win05/horror-nakata.html. This is the interview with Hideo Nakata used in the independent study.

   *Pantone*. (28 de 10 de 2011). Obtenido de colour think tank: http://www.pantone.com/pages/pantone/Pantone.aspx?pg=19382&ca=29. In this page i could undertsand and investigate more about color psychology. This was the web page used for analysing the bathroom scene in The Shining.

   *Pete*. (25 de 09 de 2010). Recuperado el 20 de 01 de 2012, de Places 2 Explore: http://places2explore.wordpress.com/2010/09/25/estes-park-colorado-the-haunted-stanley-hotel-hdr-part-1/. The source gave me a look of the Overlook hotel.

   Riaz, H. (7 de 03 de 2011). *The truth Journal*. Recuperado el 20 de 01 de 2012, de http://haroonriaz.wordpress.com/2011/03/07/the-vision-of-stanley-kubrick/. This source gave me the vision of Stanley Kubrick, it explained me what was Kubrick looking for. Thanks to this page i understood that Kubrick wanted to make a mystic character, such a Jack.

   Rose, J. (2009). *STUDYING THE DEVIL’S BACKBONE (El espinazo del diablo) .* auteur. http://www.auteur.co.uk/UserFiles/File/Studying%20Devils%20Backbone%20long.pdf. The page was extremely useful, as it gave me the general outlines of the Devil´s Backbone. From it i understood the characterisation and many charcaters and the techniques used by the director in sound and camera framing.

   Stefano, J. (Escritor), & Hitchcock, A. (Dirección). (1960). *Psycho* [Película]. United States Of America. Original movie used from The Shining.

   studios, U. (18 de 07 de 2008). *Universal studios: the tour*. Recuperado el 20 de 12 de 2012, de http://www.cs.berkeley.edu/~karthik/pics/2001-12-4-US/1/html/2.042-IMG\_0751.html. Gives me a picture of the overloo hotel.

   Takahashi, H. (Escritor), & Nakata, H. (Dirección). (1998). *The Ring* [Película]. Japan . Original movie used of The Ring.

   Toro, G. d. (Escritor), & Toro, G. d. (Dirección). (2001). *The Devils Backbone* [Película]. Spain. Original movie used of the Devil´s Backbone.

   wbgene. (28 de 03 de 2011). *Fact of the day blog*. Recuperado el 20 de 01 de 2012, de http://factofthedayblog.com/500/movies/fotd-who-was-marion-crane-on-her-way-to-meet-when-she-made-the-mistake-of-stopping-off-at-the-bates-motel/ Imagine still of Marion Crane in the shower.

   wiki, F. C. (07 de 04 de 2011). *Fictional Characters wiki*. Recuperado el 20 de 01 de 2012, de http://characters.wikia.com/wiki/Norman\_Bates. Analysis of Norman Bates. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. JOHNSON. PSYCOLOGY OF COLOR. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)